

YOU GOT THIS

Tips for parents talking to their kids about sex



Talk early, talk often

It's never too early and it's never too late to start talking about sexual health with your child. Start talking to your child about bodies when they are an infant. Always use medical names for body parts: penis, testes, vagina, vulva, etc.



Use “teachable moments”

TV, movies, social media, the internet, books and daily conversations can all provide endless opportunities to bring up topics related to sexual health. Use these to offer lots of little conversations over time from toddlerhood to teenhood, not just one “big talk.”



Open communication is key

Good communication needs two-way talks, not one-way lectures. If you're feeling self-conscious, start conversations when you're doing the dishes or in the car. Take time to listen and ask your kids what they think.



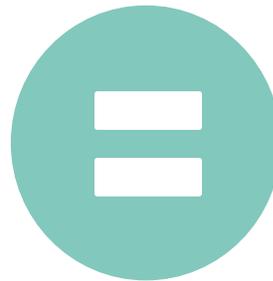
It's about the music, not the lyrics

Don't worry about saying everything “right.” Focus on the values that you want to share with your child and keep that as your goal. People don't often remember every single word that is said, but will remember how they felt about the conversation.



Talk about the joys of sexuality

Talking about sexual health is not just talking about sex. It's talking about relationships, love, bodies, gender, feelings, values, babies, growing up, and more. This might include telling them that sexuality is natural and healthy, and that loving relationships and intimacy can be some of the best parts of life.



Don't assume that every child is heterosexual

Many people identify somewhere along the LGBTQIA spectrums. Often, family rejection (or the fear of rejection) can lead to poor health outcomes for LGBTQIA young people. If you want your child to talk with you about their identities, let them know that you love them no matter what.



WHEN QUESTIONS COME UP

DON'T BE CONCERNED ABOUT TELLING "TOO MUCH, TOO SOON."

Often parents tell "too little, too late."

Provided in an open, honest, and loving manner, information need not cause fear, nor does it encourage experimentation. Remember: your children are hearing about sex everywhere else. They deserve to hear it from you too.

ANSWER QUESTIONS AS THEY COME UP AND LISTEN CAREFULLY TO WHAT IS BEING ASKED.

Don't put your child off, they may not ask again. Reward a question with, "I'm glad you came to me with that question." Say this before you respond to what was asked. It will teach them to come to you when they have other questions.

ESTABLISH AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE CHILDREN FEEL FREE TO ASK QUESTIONS

Be an "askable parent." It is never a good idea to tell your child to wait until they are older before you will answer their questions. When children ask questions, you have a chance to help them learn.

ANTICIPATE YOUR CHILD'S QUESTIONS, AND THEN PRACTICE YOUR RESPONSES AHEAD OF TIME.

Become familiar with typical sexual questions and behaviors that occur at various ages. This will reduce the chance of being caught off guard.

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS:

Why are these body parts private?
Will I have breasts, pubic hair or a penis like yours? When?
Where did I come from?
How did I get in there? How did I get out?
When can I have a baby?
How does milk get into the breasts?
Why does my penis get hard?
What are pads/tampons for?
Do men ever marry other men?

ANSWERING TOUGH QUESTIONS

1. Keep your face and voice calm.
2. Affirm the question.
 - "I'm so glad you asked me!"
 - "I wondered about that when I was your age, too."
3. Ask the question back to them.
 - "What do you think that means?"
 - "Where did you hear about this?"
4. Give a simple but accurate answer.
 - "Babies grow in a special place inside the body called the uterus."
5. Ask what they think.
 - "How does that make you feel?"
6. Tell them how you feel about the subject, without sounding judgmental.
7. Check in.
 - "Does that answer your question?"



**Family Tree
Clinic**

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

ANATOMY, PREGNANCY, AND BIRTH

The Bare Naked Book *Kathy Stinson, 2006* Age birth +

A matter-of-fact introduction for toddlers to the parts of the body

When You Were Inside Mommy *Joanna Cole, 200.* Age 2+

Designed to tell children about birth in simple terms

It's not the stork! *Robie H. Harris, 2006* Age 4+

This book has great illustrations and body diversity. It helps tell the story of where babies come from in a clear and factual way

What Makes a Baby *Cory Silverburg, 2012* Age 3+.

This book focuses on how babies are made (with sperm, eggs, and a uterus) and applies to **every family**; including those using assisted insemination, with transgender parents, with same sex parents, families formed through adoption, and more.

FAMILY DIVERSITY

Mommy, Mama, and Me/ Daddy, Papa, and Me *Leslie Newman, 2008* Ages 1.5+

Who's In a Family? *Robert Skutch, 1997* Ages 2+

And Tango Makes Three *Peter Parnell and Justin Richardson, 2005* Ages 2+

The Family Book *Todd Parr, 2003* Ages 3+

Who's in My Family? *Robie Harris, 2012* Ages 3+

SAFETY

Your body belongs to you *Cornelia Spelman, 2000* Age 2+

It's My Body *Lory Freeman and Carol Deach, 1982* Age 2+

Loving Touches *Lory Freeman and Carol Deach, 1986* Age 2+

Do you have a secret? *Jennifer Moore-Mallinos, 2005* Age 4+

I Can Play It Safe *Alison Feigh, 2008* Age 4+

MISC

Who Are You? The Kid's Guide to Gender Identity *Brook Pressin-Whedbee, 2017* Age 3+

Tell Me About Sex, Grandma *Anastasia Higginbotham, 2017* Age 4+

Discusses sexuality broadly; including safety, consent, emotions, and pleasure.

Worm Loves Worm *JJ Austrian, 2016* Age 2+

Who wears the dress? Who wears the tux? It doesn't matter because worm loves worm.

Julian is a Mermaid *Jessica Love, 2018* Age 3+

PUBERTY (AGES 8+)

Sex is a Funny Word: A Book About Bodies, Feelings, and YOU

Cory Silverberg and illustrated by Fiona Smyth, 2015

It's Perfectly Normal: Changing Bodies, Sex and Sexual Health

Robie H. Harris and illustrated by Michael Emberly, 2004

Celebrate Your Body (And It's Changes, Too!)

Sonya Renee Taylor and illustrated by Cait Brennan, 2018

Boy's Guide to Becoming a Teen

American Medical Association, Kate Gruenwald, and Amy Middleman, 2006

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

FOR PARENTS

Off Limits: A Parent's Guide to Keeping Kids Safe from Sexual Abuse

Sandy K Wurtele, Ph.D and Feather Berkower, M.S.W., 2010

Talk to Me First: Everything You Need to Know to Become Your Kids' "Go-To" Person About Sex.

Deborah Roffman, 2012

Who Better Than You? Educating Your Child about Sex, Love & Relationships Audiobook

Dr. Yvonne Kristin Fulbright

Breaking the Hush Factor: Ten Rules For Talking with Teenagers About Sex

Dr. Karen Rayne, 2015

For Goodness Sex: Changing the Way We Talk to Teens About Sexuality, Values, and Health

Al Vernacchio, 2014

This Is A Book For Parents of Gay Kids: A Question and Answer Guide to Everyday Life

Dannielle Owens-Reid and Kristin Russo, 2014

GAMES/TOYS

Organ Plush Toys (Uterus, Ovaries, Placenta, Testicle, and Prostate)

www.iheartguts.com

HAPE Your Body 5 Layer Wooden Puzzles Age 3+

www.amazon.com

HAPE Mother Layer Puzzle Age 3+

www.amazon.com

My Incredible Body App Age 5+

www.visiblebody.com

Rainbow Train (CD) by Chana Rothman Age birth +

<https://store.cdbaby.com/cd/rainbowtrain> OR www.amazon.com

ONLINE RESOURCES

Talking tips and new research about having difficult conversations

childrennow.org/parenting-resources/

Articles, research, and tips about sex education for parents

advocatesforyouth.org/parents-sex-ed-center-home

Look up information, resources, and tools by age or topic

teachingsexualhealth.ca/parents

Information and resources about media (apps, tv, internet, etc..) for parents

cmch.tv/parents/askthemediatrician

Information about media literacy for the whole family

commonsensemedia.org

Online resource for information about bodies and puberty for kids

kidshealth.org

Family Tree Clinic
www.familytreeclinic.org
651.645.0478



Updated 10.18

Lindsey Hoskins
lindsey@familytreeclinic.org
Tatum Bishop
tbishop@familytreeclinic.org
Katie Robinson
krobinson@familytreeclinic.org

STAGES OF SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT

Birth to 2 years

- Develops attitudes toward body image (both positive and negative)
- Explores body parts and genitals, both in public and private.
- Rubs private parts, with hands or against objects.
- Experiences sensations of pleasure, including erection/vaginal lubrication
- Establishes self-esteem and trust in others
- Is encouraged by society to develop gender identity
- Learns gender related behavior expectations by observation
- Shows private parts to others.
- Begins to ask questions, especially about “poop” and “pee” and private parts.
- Wants to be naked.

3-4 years

- “You get a baby at the store.”
- “The baby went into mommy’s tummy.”
- Becomes aware of and curious about gender/body differences
- Will probably masturbate in front of others unless taught to keep that behavior private
- Pursues body exploration play with other children (I’ll show you mine if you show me yours.)
- Is curious about child and adult bodies.
- Continues to want to touch women’s breasts.
- May confuse swallowing, digestion and elimination with how baby gets born
- Establishes firm gender identity.
- Has fun with bathroom humor, likes to say “naughty” words.
- Mimics adult behavior.
- Is curious about where they came from.
- Still wants to be naked.
- Asks many questions about bodies and bodily functions.
- Attempts to see other people naked (i.e. in changing room).

5-8 years

- “When people are already made, they make other people.”
- “The sperm swims into the vagina and eats the egg. Then it grows into a baby.”
- Continues sexual play activities and masturbation, but more often in private.
- May seek out photos of nude bodies.
- Viewing/listening to sexual content in media (TV, music, internet, video games, etc.)
- Begins to want more privacy.
- Beginning of sexual/romantic attraction to peers.
- Sexually-oriented daydreams begin.
- Becomes curious about pregnancy and birth.
- Has strong friendships and relationships with family members.
- Shows strong interest in gender roles, often based on stereotypes.
- Has a basic sexual orientation.
- Explores adult relationships, plays at “being” mother/father



Behavioral and Physical Warning Signs a Child May Have Been Abused

Some of these behavioral signs can show up at other stressful times in a child's life such as divorce, the death of a family member, friend or pet, or when there are problems in school, as well as when abuse is involved. Sexual development is a part of every human regardless of age. Any one sign doesn't mean the child was abused, but several of them mean there may be cause for concern.



Do you notice some of the following signs in children you know?

- Nightmares, fear of the dark, or other sleeping problems.
- Extreme fear of "monsters".
- Spacing out at odd times.
- Sudden mood swings: rage, fear, anger, or withdrawal.
- An older child behaving like a younger child, such as bed-wetting or thumb sucking.
- Fear of certain people or places (e.g., a child may not want to be left alone with a baby-sitter, a friend, a relative, or some other child or adult; or a child who is usually talkative and cheery may become quiet and distant when around a certain person).
- Sexual activities with toys or other children, such as simulating sex with dolls or asking other children/siblings to behave sexually.
- Refusing to talk about a "secret" he/she has with an adult or older child.
- New words for private body parts.
- Talking about a new older friend.
- Suddenly having money.
- Stomach illness all of the time with no identifiable reason.
- Loss of appetite, or trouble eating or swallowing.
- Cutting or burning herself or himself as an adolescent.
- Pain in or around the genitals, anus, or mouth.
- Genital sores or milky fluids in the genital area.
- Unexplained bruises, redness, or bleeding of the genitals, anus, or mouth.

If you answered "yes" to any of the last 3 questions, you need to bring the child to a doctor for a physical exam.

*If you see behaviors that concern you, call **1-888-PREVENT** for information, or visit us on the web at www.stopitnow.org/mn*

If you answered "yes" to some of these questions and do not know how to talk about these issues, or you want further information, please call our Helpline toll-free at 1-888-PREVENT (1-888-773-8368) Monday - Friday from 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. (CST). You can call and have a confidential conversation with a professional about what you are seeing, learn about local resources, and what options are available to you.

Sponsored by Project Pathfinder, Inc. in collaboration with the Jacob Wetterling Foundation, the Midwest Regional Children's Advocacy Center, the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault, the Minnesota Department of Corrections, the Minnesota Department of Health, Prevent Child Abuse Minnesota, the Sexual Violence Center and Survivors Network Minnesota.

Stop it Now! Minnesota is supported by Grant/Cooperative Agreement Number U50/CCU522495-01 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). It's contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the CDC.

OUR BODY SAFETY RULES

- 1 No one is allowed to touch your private parts
- 2 You should not touch someone else's private parts
- 3 If someone tries to touch your private parts; say, "NO!"
- 4 If someone tries to touch your private parts, try to get away and tell
- 5 Never keep secrets about touching
- 6 No one is allowed to take pictures of your private parts
- 7 _____
- 8 _____



TEACHABLE MOMENTS

Please feel free to make changes in these scenarios so they most closely resemble your family! The intent is to find opportunities to communicate your values in common daily occurrences.

ANATOMY

Your child notices that their body parts look different than yours (breasts, body hair, genitals, etc.).
(The Bare Naked Book, It's Not the Stork)

SELF-TOUCH

You notice that your child is often touching their penis/vulva. (Tell Me About Sex, Grandma)

PRIVACY

Someone in the family would like to have privacy in the bathroom. (Your Body Belongs to You)

SAFETY

Your Child wants to play with the neighbor kids and go in their house. You want to talk about safety first. (Off Limits, Your Body Belongs to You, Do You Have a Secret?)

EXPLORATION PLAY

Your kids are playing in the bedroom and giggling. When you peek in the door, they are playing a game that involves poking each other's private parts. (It's Not the Stork, Off limits, Your Body Belongs to You)

CONSENT

Your child is chasing down all the kids at the playground to give them hugs. Some of this hugging appears to be unwelcome. (Your Body Belongs to You)

In your extended family, there is a lot of pressure to kiss goodbye, and you can sense your child isn't comfortable with it (Off Limits, Your Body Belongs to You)

GENDER

You are at the store and your child asks another child if they are a boy or a girl. (Who Are You?)

MEDIA

You are at the mall, and there are large posters of people wearing lingerie. Your child asks what "sexy" means. (Tell Me About Sex, Grandma)

REPRODUCTION

Your child is pretending to be pregnant, putting a doll up their shirt. (What Makes a Baby, It's Not the Stork)

Answer the following questions after reading each teachable moment:

- If you were in this situation, how would you start a conversation with your child?
- How does your child's age affect the conversation? Does gender play a role?
- What personal values and beliefs would you want to communicate in the discussion?

